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BATMAN

...AND ONE SHALL SURELY DIE!

MANDRAKE

1935 1985 50 DC

WOMEN DARK and DANGEROUS

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GUSTING INTO THE ABANDONED OBSERVATORY LIKE B-B'S ALREADY BLOODIED, RED HAILSTONES STING TWO FIGURES MERGED AS ONE.

YET EACH FEELS NOTHING BUT THE SOFTNESS OF THE OTHER.

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THEN, BETWEEN DARK MAN AND PALE WOMAN (WHO, IF ANYTHING, IS DARKER THAN HE) COLD AIR FINALLY REACHES...

I NEED *MONEY*, BATMAN -- RESEARCH *MUST* BE DONE. WHATEVER CATACLYSM IS VISITING THE EARTH, IT'S GETTING *WORSE* -- THE RED RAIN AND HAIL, LIGHTNING STORMS, EARTHQUAKES...

THEN YOU PLAN TO *CONTINUE* STEALING --

AND WHAT *NOW*, BATMAN? DO WE KISS *AGAIN* WHILE THE RED SKIES RAGE... OR DO WE GO ABOUT OUR *SEPARATE AFFAIRS*?

THE ANSWER, NOCTURNA, DEPENDS ON WHAT OUR SEPARATE AFFAIRS *ARE*.

HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED WHO ALL THE *VICTIMS ARE*?

I'VE NOTICED, NOCTURNA.

THAT THEY'RE ALL *RICH*, HARDLY EXCUSES --

MY AFFAIRS ARE HERE IN THIS OBSERVATORY -- STUDYING *THAT*, THE DEATH OF THE *NIGHT*, PERHAPS THE END OF THE *WORLD* -- AND TRYING TO FIND A SOLUTION TO IT, ANY WAY I CAN.

INCLUDING *CRIME*? INCLUDING *THEFT*?

THEY'RE ALL *POLITICIANS*, BATMAN, OR POLITICAL *STOOGES* -- WHO HAVE GOTTEN RICH AT THE EXPENSE OF THE *PUBLIC PROGRAMS* AND *VITAL RESEARCH*!

LIKE THE RESEARCH ONCE CONDUCTED IN THIS OBSERVATORY? THE RESEARCH THAT WENT AWRY AND BLEACHED A BEAUTIFUL ASTRONOMER'S *SKIN WHITE*?

USING THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY OF GOTHAM TO *STEAL* FOR YOU?

BAM!

PRECISELY.

THE SAME RESEARCH THAT FILLED ME WITH A *LOVE OF NIGHT*, OF THE *MOON* AND *STARS*, OF EVERYTHING BEYOND OUR *REACH*.

DON'T *YOU* WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S *GET FIRE TO THE SKY*? DON'T YOU *CARE*?

I ALSO CARE ABOUT *YOU*, NOCTURNA, ABOUT *US*--AND I *TOLD YOU*...

"SOMEWHERE OUT IN THAT DARK HELL IS THE NIGHT-SLAYER... AND HE'S LOOKING FOR *YOU*."

KILL HER... I'LL *KILL* HER...

AND IF I DON'T REFORM MY SOUL...

NO, BUT...

BUT *WHAT*?

MY AFFAIRS ARE *STOPPING CRIME*, NOCTURNA, *WHEREVER* I FIND IT--AND I DON'T CARE *HOW* NOBLE YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL *IS*...

...I JUST CAN'T BUY THE ROBIN HOOD *RATIONALIZATION*.

AND I DON'T CARE HOW RICH A *POLITICAL DRONE* IS.

...IF I DON'T *STOP STEALING*, YOUR CONSCIENCE WON'T LET YOU "*PROTECT*" ME, IS *THAT* IT?

IF WE'RE *ALL* GOING TO DIE, NEITHER MONEY NOR CORRUPTION WILL SAVE HIM. SO I *REPEAT*: WHAT NOW? DO WE KISS AGAIN OR--

WE GO ABOUT OUR *SEPARATE AFFAIRS*.

AND YET YOU'RE NOT *ARRESTING ME*? YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK THE *OTHER WAY*?

BUT WHAT IF I COMMIT *ANOTHER "CRIME"*?

I'M WHAT I *AM*, NOCTURNA, AND YOU'RE WHAT *YOU* ARE.

LEAVING US IN A STRANGE QUANDARY, BATMAN.

YOU LOVE ME BECAUSE I'M *DARK* AND *DANGEROUS*... YET IF I *DO* SOMETHING DARK AND DANGEROUS--

HOW DO YOU KNO--

-- YOU *CAN'T* LOVE ME.

WHY DO YOU *SAY* THAT?

"BECAUSE YOU'VE ALWAYS LOVED WOMEN DARK AND DANGEROUS-- AND THEREFORE YOU'VE NEVER REALLY LOVED ANY WOMAN AT ALL."

ANOTHER ONE DOWN THERE...

DAMN HER.

DAMN THE NIGHT AND DAMN US ALL.

JUST LIKE ALL THE *OTHERS*-- KILLED BY THE SAME STILETTO-- HIS MASK "*CRUCIFIED*" ABOVE HIM--BRUTAL AND GHASTLY AND--

FRANKIE--?

YOU *BACK HERE*, FRANKIE?

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

F-F-FRANKIE...!

OH, NO...

NOOOOOO

AND SINCE THE POLICE WILL NO DOUBT PIN THESE MURDERS ON ME--

--I'VE GOT TO SOLVE THEM MYSELF.

AND THIS IS MY FIRST BREAK SO FAR-- A MEMBER OF THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY WHO'S STILL ALIVE.

AND SO, MORE SILENT THAN A PANTHER'S SHADOW, SHE FOLLOWS THE PANICKED MASK THROUGH YET ANOTHER BLEEDING NIGHT...

...UNTIL--

THAT RAMSHACKLE WAREHOUSE-- IT MUST BE THEIR HIDEOUT.

--AND BEFORE I TAKE MY CUT FROM THE LAST SERIES OF THEFTS, I WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU'VE DONE WELL...

...ALMOST AS WELL AS ROBIN HOOD'S BAND OF MERRY MEN.

AMONG YOUR NEXT VICTIMS WILL BE THE WATER COMMISSIONER'S NEPHEW AND--

FRANKIE! HE'S DEAD-- JUST LIKE THE OTHERS!

WE SPLIT UP IN THE ALLEY BEHIND THE COUNCILMAN'S HOUSE!

AFTER I CASED THE PLACE, I CALLED FOR HIM--AND HE WAS *DEAD!*

WELL, NOCTURNA? YOU'RE OUR *NEW* LEADER...

YEAH--WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT THIS?!

I...I NOW KNOW WHO'S COMMITTING THE MURDERS--THE *NIGHT-SLAYER*--AND I'LL SEE THAT THEY'RE STOPPED...EVENTUALLY.

BUT FOR NOW, IF YOU WANT OUR PROFITABLE PARTNERSHIP TO CONTINUE--

--GET ON WITH THE *THEFTS.*

I DON'T *LIKE* IT.

AND ON THE WAREHOUSE ROOF, UNDER RED-SLASHED HEAVENS...

THERE IS A SOFT CHUNK, AS OF SOMETHING BITING WOOD...

...AND THEN SHE IS GONE.

EVER SINCE BLACK MASK GOT SENT UP TO ARKHAM ASYLUM, THIS GANG HAS STUMBLED STRAIGHT TO HELL.

I...I DON'T *BELIEVE* IT...

... AND SINCE I CERTAINLY CAN'T *OUTRUN* IT--

UHN!

NO CHOICE NOW-- GOT TO OUTRUN IT... BUT THE WIND'S SO STRONG...

...BLOWING IT SO FAST...

MAYBE THE RED HAIL WILL *PUNCTURE* IT...

NO SUCH LUCK-- AND I'VE JUST RUN OUT OF *ROOFTOPS* AT THE *RIVER*.

NOT MUCH ON THE *OTHER* SIDE...

SO IT'S EITHER THAT OLD *OBSERVATORY* OR SOMETHING *BEYOND*...

THEN AGAIN, *MAYBE* SHE JUST WANTED TO *GET AWAY*--AND DOESN'T CARE *WHERE* THE WIND TAKES HER...

BECAUSE THEY WERE TRUE? AM I BLIND TO ANY WOMAN WHO'S LOVE THEN [illegible]?

BRUCE WAYNE HAS FEELINGS FOR NORMAL WOMEN--FOR VICKI VALE AND JULIA--

AND JUST AS SOON AS I ASSUME THIS CLOAK AND COWL..

THAT'S ANOTHER THING I CAN'T DENY--WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, BRUCE WAYNE IS THE BATMAN... BUT THE BATMAN IS NOT BRUCE WAYNE

AND SO, EVEN WHILE THE WHOLE WORLD MAY BE IN DANGER...IT'S MY OWN SOUL I MUST SOLVE.

SO FAR, VICKI VALE'S FEMININITY TO THE SECRET SERVICE...BUT THAT WILL SOON CHANGE--

IT'S TIME TO [illegible]

YOU'RE A HARD TASKMASTER, JIM TRAYNOR, AND IF YOU WEREN'T SUCH A HUNK--

LOSING MY BALANCE!

NOW THAT I'VE HELPED YOU INSTALL YOUR NEW [illegible] ROOM, I'M [illegible]

IT'S CALLED AN EARTH-

AND IF YOU HADN'T BEEN HERE TO CATCH THAT

SO HOW WOULD YOU HANDLE THIS CRAZY CASE OF THE MURDERS, BASIL?

BESIDES LIGHTIN' YER PIPE

AN' ANOTHER THING--ALL FOR CRY-EYE...

TOK TOK TOK

AND THUS IS THE SANCTUMS [illegible] INVADED.

TIME AGAIN [illegible] OF

LOSE YOUR MARBLES, BULLOCK? THERE'S A LOT OF RED ONES BOUNCIN' AROUND RIGHT OUTSIDE..

WELL, WELL, WHAT BRINGS THE BOY WONDER TO THE WRONG SIDE O' THE TRACKS?

JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW OUR OTHER HALF LIVES.

IN FANTASIES, LOOKS LIKE

[illegible] CAREFUL - SINCE IT'S FROM YOUR BRAIN, IT'S BOUND TO MELT

SO THE WHOLE BULL-IN-A-CHINA-SHOP ROUTINE IS NOTHING BUT YOUR IDEA OF A SILVER SCREEN COP?

MAYBE... OR MAYBE THAT'S THE WAY I REALLY AM -

--AND I'M JUST MORE CAREFUL AT HOME WHERE IT'S QUIET - UNTIL JOKERS LIKE YOU BANG ON MY DOOR

JUST WANTED TO DROP OFF A TIP, BULLOCK, ABOUT THE MURDERS OF THE FALSE FACE SOCIETY -- IT AIN'T NYCTLANA AND IT AIN'T THE CATWOMAN EITHER.

IT'S NIGHT-SLAYER.

BUT EVEN IF IT *IS* AN ACT, KID, IT'S ONE I CAN'T *CONTROL*-- AND IT *DOES* COME IN HANDY AT TIMES.

NOW WHADDAYA *WANT*? I'M LATE FOR A DOUBLE FEATURE AT THE *REGENCY*.

AIN'T THIS A KICK - THE BATMAN AN' HIS PINT-SIZED SIDEKICK FINALLY BOP INTO A GEEK THEY CAN'T HANDLE ON THEIR *OWN*?

NIGHT-SLAYER WANTS TO KILL NOCTURNA,

TAKE ANY CHANCES -YOU WANT ALL THE HELP YOU

CUZ HAVEE NOCTURNA'S GOIN' YOUR MOMMA?

AND MAYBE SHE'S NOT... BUT EVEN IF

I'M NOT AFRAID THERE'S ANOTHER WOMAN, FATHER.

I KNOW HE'S NOT SEEING ANYONE--SHE'S JUST SOMEONE NEW, THAT MUSCLEMAN... AND BESIDES, JEALOUSY ISN'T THE ISSUE.

HE'S NEVER HERE AT NIGHT WHEN I VISIT, YET WHEN I DO SEE HIM, HE SEEMS TO LIKE ME A LOT.

JULIA

NO, FATHER--THERE'S SOMETHING VAGUE AND MYSTERIOUS ABOUT HIM, SOMETHING I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND IF HE'S NOT CANDID.

LET'S FACE IT--HE'S AN ACTIVE MAN WHO'S BUSY TIME.

BRUCE WAYNE DOESN'T LOVE ME, AND I'M BEGINNING TO THINK HE *NEVER WILL.*

AFTER THAT EPIC CROSSING OF A RAGING RIVER READY TO FLOOD, LET'S HOPE IT'S NOTHING *BEYOND* THIS OBSERVATORY...

AND AS FOR HER DESTINATION BEING THE *WHIM OF THIS WIND*, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO *THINK* ABOUT IT

NOT ANOTHER EARTHQUAKE!

SO I LOVE HE
AND THERe
MAY TO
THE FACT...

THE RIVER
AGAIN AND

--FROM DES
SOMETHING THAT
MAY IN THE END BE
MORE PRECIOUS
THAN THE WORLD
ITSELF.

AHA!

BUT IT WAS WORTH IT AFTER ALL

NO NEED FOR SUCH UNHEALTHY FEELINGS, CATWOMAN.

I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

HUH--?

I NEVER SAID SHE *WAS* THE ONE I WANTED, ROBIN, BUT SHE *IS* THE *KEY* TO THIS WHOLE *MESS*... AND WHEN THE POLICE TRY TO *LOCK ME UP*, I'LL *NEED* A KEY.

OVER MY DEAD BODY!

IF YOU DON'T MIND, I HAVE

IT'S *NIGHT-SLAYER* YOU WANT, NOT *HER*.

NIGHT-SLAYER... AND *HER* KILLING ALL THESE INNOCENT PEOPLE, TO GET AT ME. HOW

THEN I'M SORRY BUT I DO WANT HER-- BECAUSE SHE'S THE ONLY THING THAT'LL STOP HIM FROM KILLING MORE

YOU'RE NOT USING HER AS BAIT, CATWOMAN

I WON'T LET YOU

IT'S MY LIFE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, ROBIN--MY NAME.

IN THE EYES OF THE POLICE, ONCE A CROOK, ALWAYS A CROOK. THEY DON'T CARE THAT I'VE CHANGED.

ALL THEY KNOW IS THAT MURDERS WERE COMMITTED SHORTLY AFTER I RETURNED TO GOTHAM

I WARNED YOU TO BACK OFF, LADY, AND I--

[illegible]

ROBIN!!

YOU DARE STRIKE HIM, CATWOMAN?!

CA-EFACE HONEY

I DARE A LOT MORE THAN THAT!

OHHH.

...AND LHIN!

AGH!

DIDN'T I TELL YOU TO LEAVE FOR ARKHAM, CATWOMAN.

I'M TELLING YOU NOW.

WELL, WE'LL WELL AFTER THAT SCENE IN THE BATCAVE, I COULD HARDLY [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

IS THAT WHY YOU [illegible] ME THE [illegible]

BECAUSE MY FREEDOM IS GETTING IN THE WAY OF YOUR ROMANCE?

LOVE, BATMAN?!

WE WERE TWO ANIMALS IN THE NIGHT NOTHING MORE

NEVER ANYTHING MORE!!

SELINA--THAT'S NOT TRUE AND YOU KNOW IT

THERE WAS MORE--A LOT MORE--AND FOR ITS SAKE, I'M BEGGING YOU TO STOP!

FORGET ABOUT OUR LOVE, BATMAN! IT'S OVER--FINISHED!

BUT AS LONG AS THAT WOMAN IS THE BEST CHANCE FOR CLEARING MY NAME AND STOPPING A MURDERER I AM TAKING HER!

AND NO ONE'S GOING TO STOP ME! NOT EVEN YOU, BATMAN, NOT EVEN--

STOP HER! RED, RAW LIGHTNING.

IT WAS YOU OR THE [illegible] ACCUSE. I'LL TELL ONE AROUND.

... AND THEN IT SIZZLES ALL THE WAY DOWN THE LONG METAL LENGTH--

--TO ERUPT FROM THE FLESH STATIONED NOW SO STIFFLY NEAR THE BOTTOM.

IN ONE BLINDING FLASH SHE SEES MORE STARS THAN THE TELESCOPE HAS EVER KNOWN.

AND THEN SHE STANDS THERE--SMOKING, VACANT-EYED--FOR A LONG BEAT OF THREE...

SELINA!!

...SURFACE PLUMMETING, HER FLESH AND COSTUME BLACKENED, HER NAME AND CONSCIENCE CLEAR.

OH...MY... GOD...

C-CATWOMAN...

THE BATMAN IS SILENT AND UNMOVING FOR A FULL MINUTE AFTER CATCHING THE BODY.

THEN:

IT'S YOUR DOING, NOCTURNA. CATWOMAN WAS RIGHT.

COME, ROBIN. WE'RE LEAVING.

HE..,HE DIDN'T *MEAN* IT, NOCTURNA. HE'S JUST--

I KNOW, ROBIN. BUT GO WITH HIM-- HE *NEEDS* YOU.

WAIT UP, BATMAN!

MAYBE SHE'S NOT--

BBBRUMMMM!!

ANOTHER *EARTHQUAKE!* A BIG ONE!!

THIS WAY, ROBIN -- HURRY!!

THE GROUND BEHIND US, BATMAN -- IT'S COLLAPSING!

KRRRUMPHH

A... A NEW CLIFF... AND THE OBSERVATORY... COMPLETELY CUT OFF!

I... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!

NOR, EVEN STANDING AT THE EDGE, CAN HE.

THE ONE WOMAN IS NOW OUT OF HIS REACH -- AND THE OTHER, IN HIS ARMS, HE HAS NEVER TOUCHED MORE CLOSELY... YET SHE MAY BE EVEN FARTHER AWAY.

WHY DID HE NOT REALIZE HOW MUCH HE CARED FOR CATWOMAN, FOR SELINA KYLE? HOW COULD HE FORGET HER SO QUICKLY?

IS IT BECAUSE... SHE CHANGED?

BECAUSE SHE WAS NO LONGER DARK AND DANGEROUS?

BECAUSE, GOD HELP HIM... SHE REFORMED?

BECAUSE SHE ACTUALLY DID WHAT HE HAS TRIED TO CONVINCE NOCTURNA TO DO?

NO... OH, GOD, NO...

CONTINUED ON 23P. PAGE FOLLOWING

NYAAAAAHRRR

WHILE IN GOTHAM, IN THE HELLISH STORM, IN THE HEAT OF STARK MADNESS--

--STILL THE NIGHT-SLAYER PURSUES HIS APPOINTED ROUNDS...

DEAD...

ONCE I FIND HER, ONCE I TOUCH HER... NOCTURNA IS DEAD.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DETECTIVE COMICS (ON SALE IN TWO WEEKS): THE MOVING FATE OF CATWOMAN... STILL BEATING!